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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6632
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0568
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4101
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7658
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5217
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1106
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1002
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000982

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/04/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: U.S. URGED TO SUPPORT OFFER TO AUNG SAN SUU KYI

REF: A. RANGOON 386

1B. RANGOON 601

1C. JULY 31 HAYDEN-RAPSON E-MAIL

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Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (C) Summary: A contact close to Burma's military leadership urged the U.S. to support Than Shwe's offer to begin a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the U.S. or UN to seek a meeting with her soon. He recommended Aung San Suu Kyi consult with prominent members of Burmese society other than the NLD "uncles" to broaden her support base and increase her respect among the military leadership.

According to him, many top military officials, including the regional commanders, support a renewed dialogue with the opposition. The Rangoon and Mandalay commanders remain in their positions and Prime Minister Soe Win is still alive.

End summary.

12. (C) Pol/econ chief met today with Phone Win, a contact with close ties to Burma's military leadership (see reftels).

Phone Win requested the meeting to inquire regarding USG receptivity to Than Shwe's offer to begin a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi. Phone Win viewed the offer as better than nothing. He recommended that if Aung San Suu Kyi decided to take up the offer, she should enter the dialogue as a representative of the Burmese people rather than the leader of the National League for Democracy Party (NLD). The NLD uncles had lost the people's confidence he argued, particularly because of their passivity during the demonstrations of the last few weeks.

13. (C) Phone Win continued that Aung San Suu Kyi should consult with national figures beyond the NLD Central Executive Committee such as leaders of the Buddhist clergy, prominent economists, and lawyers. Phone Win believed that if Aung San Suu Kyi emphasized her support base beyond the NLD, she would command more respect from the military as well as regional powers. He also recommended that Aung San Suu Kyi, the UN, and the international community should demand transparency should a dialogue take place. The cloak of

secrecy surrounding previous negotiations between Aung San Suu Kyi and the regime had worked to the generals' advantage, he believed. Phone Win urged the US or the UN to seek a meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi soon to consult with her directly regarding her receptivity to Than Shwe's offer.

¶4. (C) Phone Win told us the Rangoon and Mandalay military commanders remain in their positions. They have neither been dismissed nor defected. Separately, Military Security Affairs confirmed to our DAO that Rangoon Commander Major General Hla Htay Win remains the Rangoon Commander. Phone Win said the orders to shoot demonstrators and round up monks had come from the very top of the regime. There was grumbling and disagreement among some colonels and generals, but all appeared to have followed their orders. The Army's discipline was intact, he emphasized.

¶5. (C) Despite this, Phone Win said the view is spreading among key officers that the Army could not maintain its grip through brutal force indefinitely and he believed many high-level officers, including regional commanders, supported a renewed dialogue with the opposition. Phone Win urged us again to support a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and offered himself as a back-channel liaison between the USG and the regional commanders, 10 of 13 whom he claims to know well. He said the regional commanders' support for the dialogue could bring pressure to bear on the top SPDC members to make concessions.

¶6. (C) Phone Win said he believed the top generals had ordered arrests to continue in order to pressure Aung San Suu Kyi to accept Than Shwe's offer. Phone Win had heard the Chinese put serious pressure on the generals to begin a dialogue to defuse international pressure. According to Phone Win's contacts, the Chinese had threatened not to veto a second UNSC resolution should one be brought to the table.

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The pictures coming out of Burma would make a second veto on a Burma resolution difficult to defend to the international community.

¶7. (C) Phone Win confirmed that Prime Minister Soe Win had not died, but was in Mingaladon military hospital in Rangoon. He had flown to Rangoon from Singapore on Monday with sophisticated medical equipment the regime had purchased for the hospital to treat him. Phone Win said that Soe Win was currently on a respirator and a feeding tube, and fading in and out of consciousness. He reported that the top three generals, Than Shwe, Maung Aye, and Thura Shwe Mann, had all traveled to Rangoon on Wednesday to say their good-byes to Soe Win, and that is when rumors began of Prime Minister's death. Phone Win also told us that Than Shwe's Wife, Daw Kyaing Kyaing, remains at the Senior General's Rangoon residence and did not travel out of the country, although she is reportedly very nervous about the unrest of the past few weeks. He said that Number Two General Maung Aye's family is currently in Nay Pyi Taw.

¶8. (C) Comment: This is not the first time Phone Win has offered himself as a back-channel to the Regime (reftels), and we believe Phone Win may keep them informed of the activities of his politically active friends. However, his access to high-level military and government officials is well-known and some members of the pro-democracy opposition trust him. 88 Generation Students leader Htay Kywe trusts him and continues to communicate with him while in hiding. His suggestion that Aung San Suu Kyi distance herself from the NLD's flailing "uncles" is not without merit; the broader her visible support base, the harder it is for the generals to claim she does not represent the views of the Burmese people. End comment.

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